

Dear members of the committee: Thank you for the opportunity to speak in support of fully funding education by expediting the ECS phase to coincide with the federal dollars running out

My name is Sara Kovack and I am an Organizer for Educators for Excellence - Connecticut, a teacher-led organization with nearly 1,000 members statewide that seeks to elevate teacher voice in policy decisions. My job is to hear from teachers in Hartford, and to ensure their thoughts, opinions, and perspectives are included when it comes to decisions such as this. These teachers and other classroom staff dedicate their careers to ensuring that their students receive a quality education, but this cannot be accomplished without the necessary funding. Connecticut has the largest racial funding gap in the nation at over \$700 million dollars, which leads to deep inequities in terms of the quality of education students have access to. To help mediate this, we need to expedite the ECS formula and fully fund education by the time the federal dollars run out.

Day to day at my job, I have the privilege of hearing from teachers concerning their experiences and struggles within the classroom. One of the biggest concerns I hear from educators is that they are severely understaffed, which in turn leads to more and more being expected of the teachers who remain. One way to mitigate this issue would be to expedite the ECS formula and ensure that teachers who are hired using federal dollars are able to stay on staff, to alleviate the additional pressure that is leading to our current teachers feeling overworked and unappreciated.

Additionally, these dollars can be used for programs that help to support schools and students. Any programs that are currently in effect will need to be supported by funds other than those coming from the federal government when they eventually run out. If we do not plan for a process in which funding can continue, how can we expect these programs to remain in place?

All of the issues I've shared above have been exacerbated by COVID. Staffing shortages are at an all time high, and students are struggling to feel connected in a school system that they've been unable to fully engage with for such an extended period of time. If we are looking to in fact mitigate learning loss and ensure that students are able to continue to grow and thrive moving forward, we need to provide schools and districts with the necessary funds to continue to hire additional staff and support programs that are providing the connection students need to feel at home in their schools once again.

At the end of the day, all students deserve an equal opportunity to succeed and thrive, and we do them a disservice when they are unable to access a quality education. I urge state leaders to fully fund education before the federal dollars run out so that the next generation can be prepared to handle the challenges of the future. It's time for us to close the opportunity gap and ensure that all students, regardless of their socioeconomic status, have the chance to succeed. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sara Kovack, Organizer, Educators For Excellence - Connecticut (E4E-CT)

About E4E

Founded by public school teachers, Educators for Excellence is a growing movement of more than 33,000 educators nationwide, united around a common set of values and principles for improving student learning and elevating the teaching profession. We work together to identify issues that impact our schools, create solutions to these challenges, and advocate for policies and programs that give all students access to a quality education.

For more information, please visit e4e.org.